

Nature, Spirituality & Popular Culture

The University of Florida

COURSE NUMBER, TIME & PLACE

Interdisciplinary Studies: IDS 2935

Lecture: Wednesday, 3-6 p.m. (all students; zoom class or if authorized, TUR L011)

Discussions will take place during the regular class period.

INSTRUCTORS

Professor Bron Taylor (Ph.D.)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Beginning with the period since Walt Disney began making animal-focused documentaries and animated films in the 1930s, continuing up through the blockbuster motion picture Avatar (2009) and the Animal Kingdom theme park further expressing its themes, this course takes a global tour examining the religious, spiritual, ethical, and political dimensions of artistic productions, scientific representations in museums, and other cultural inventions, in which nature takes center stage. We will explore the international cultural tributaries, influences, and controversies such productions engender, for they constitute important ways that environmental ethics, and quests for environmentally sustainable livelihoods and lifeways, are expressed and promoted. The course will enhance students' abilities to interpret these cultural productions and their evocative power, explore their own reactions to these social phenomena, whilst learning to think more deeply about their own places in, and obligations to, the natural world.

The course will also help students to recognize how different worldviews — the philosophical, religious, and scientific understandings of the universe and biosphere — are expressed and promoted in popular culture. This will also enhance students' international sophistication as they learn from where and when the world's predominant religions emerged — for example Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism and Hinduism in Asia, Judaism, Christianity and Islam from the Near East — while also learning about the worldviews and ethical orientations typical of indigenous traditions, among contemporary Pagans and devotees New Age and science-inspired nature spiritualities. Analytic tools from the Humanities and humanistic social sciences will also be provided in order to enhance student understanding of important trend at the intersection of nature, spirituality, and popular culture.

GENERAL EDUCATION | HUMANITIES/INTERNATIONAL | WRITING REQUIREMENT | QUEST "NATURE & CULTURE" FOCUS

This course has been approved for UF'S General Education credit in the Humanities and International Studies areas. It has been approved under (H), International (N) and Quest 1 "Nature and Culture" theme. It also meets the University Writing Requirement (2000 words).

Pages 2-5 explain the purpose and student learning outcomes for these credits. **Specific information about the course, such as readings, assignments and grading, begins on page 6.**

GENERAL EDUCATION | HUMANITIES & INTERNATIONAL FOCI

Humanities (H)

Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

International (N)

This designation is always in conjunction with another program area.

International courses promote the development of students' global and intercultural awareness. Students examine the cultural, economic, geographic, historical, political, and/or social experiences and processes that characterize the contemporary world, and thereby comprehend the trends, challenges, and opportunities that affect communities around the world. Students analyze and reflect on the ways in which cultural, economic, political, and/or social systems and beliefs mediate their own and other people's understanding of an increasingly connected world.

General Education Subject Areas will be met through:

Regular lectures and near-weekly writing assignments, in-class discussions, and feedback on their assigned research paper, will help students to analyze the geographically diverse and international social contexts, and worldviews, leading to and undergirding the various religious, spiritual, scientific, and ethical understandings that are being expressed in popular culture, which they have encountered through readings and diverse media in the course. Every student will also be expected – and pushed – during the discussion to articulate their understandings and emerging views orally during discussion sections. The weekly topics identified course schedule provides more detail on specific phenomena we will be analyzing and the General Education – relevant issues students will be engaging.

GENERAL EDUCATION STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The general education student learning outcomes (SLOs) describe the knowledge, skills and attitudes that students are expected to acquire while completing a general education course at the University of Florida. They fall in three main areas:

- 1. Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, methodologies and theories used within the subject area.
- 2. Critical Thinking:** Students carefully and logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the subject area.
- 3. Communication:** Students clearly and effectively communicate knowledge, ideas, and reasoning in written or oral forms appropriate to the subject area.

General Education / Humanities specific SLOs.

Through exams, written work, and class discussions students will demonstrate that they understand, can think critically, and communicate effectively about the role religion, spirituality, and popular culture often plays in contemporary life. Specifically:

- 1. Content:** 1) Students will show they understand critical course terms such as religion, spirituality, nature, and popular culture, as well as theories scholars use to understand the religious dimension of human life, and specific methodological tools they deploy when analyzing beliefs, perceptions, and practices related to what people variously construe as religion or spirituality; (2) Students will show they can explain the above mentioned terms, theories, and approaches to the study of religion, nature and popular culture.

2. **Critical Thinking:** (1) Students will show they understand the major, often competing and incompatible knowledge systems around the world and how these are related theories of environmental ethics, and the assumptions, religious, philosophical, and scientific, upon which they are based; (2) Students will show they can discern differences between differing knowledge systems and understand their origins and the diverse ways they engage the religious/spiritual, affective, ethical, and political dimensions of life; and (3) Student will demonstrate an ability to think reflexively and critically about their own spiritual views and values, how they arrived at them, and whether and if so why any of the many perspectives they are encountering in the course they find emotionally and intellectually compelling.
3. **Communication:** (1) Nearly every week, students will provide a written response paper showing they understand the week's assignments and they illuminate the ways nature-related spiritualities and values are constructed, expressed, promoted, and contested in popular culture (2) Students will demonstrate they understand the process of writing research paper by submitting a draft research paper, and after receiving feedback on it, revising it and then submitting a final, properly formatted and referenced original research paper, including a literature review that draws on refereed scholarly research. (3) On their final exam students will demonstrate an ability to write a coherent and well-reasoned essay expressing how, given what they have encountered in this course, their minds have changed or remained the same about their place in the world and responsibilities to it.

General Education / International studies specific SLOs

Through exams, written work, and class discussions students will demonstrate that they understand, can think critically, and communicate effectively about the role religion, spirituality, and popular culture often plays in contemporary life. Specifically:

1. **Content:** (1) Students will show that they understand the major differences between religious perceptions and practices around the world, including the ways indigenous traditions typically differ from the world's predominant religions. 2) Students will show that they understand how in the contemporary world popular culture expresses and promotes, in a host of ways, diverse perspectives on the human place in the world and their responsibilities to it and one another, and the stakes involved given the increasingly interconnected nature of Earth's biocultural systems.
2. **Critical Thinking:** (1) Students will demonstrate an ability to analyze and think critically about the strengths and weaknesses of competing and incompatible knowledge systems around the world, including those with implicit or explicit environmental ethics. (2) Students will show they can recognize the cultural and international sources of these differing perspectives in a wide variety of cultural productions that engage religious/spiritual, affective, ethical, and political dimensions of life.
3. **Communication:** (1) Through exams, reading responses, and oral responses during classroom discussions, students will show that they understand how nature-related spiritualities and values are constructed, expressed, promoted, and contested in popular culture, and these are increasingly globalized processes leading to new hybrid religious forms, which variously both hinder and promote pro-pro-environmental behavior and thereby affect biocultural systems. (2) Students will be demonstrate through their exams and written work that they can identify popular culture productions, their international and cultural sources, as well as divergent scholarly perspectives on their impacts upon biocultural systems today and in the future.

WRITING REQUIREMENT

The University Writing Requirement is designed to promote student fluency in writing. Course instructors will assess student's written assignments with respect to content, grammar, punctuation, usage of standard written English, clarity, coherence, organization, style, and mechanics. To help students improve their writing I have provided a [writing well guide](#). Students who study this guide and avoid the problems identified in it typically improve and do well with their writing assignments.

I have also prepared a writing assessment rubric to explain how course instructors will evaluate written work.

Professor Taylor's Writing Assessment Rubric

	Satisfactory (Y)	Unsatisfactory (N)
Content	Good writing demonstrates an ability to understand and critically evaluate facts, different perspectives, and fault lines among the perspectives you are analyzing in course materials.	Unsatisfactory writing has minimal if any relevant discussion or citation of content relevant to the assignment.
Organization	Often neglected, one's writing must be work in a coherent manner that clearly states a thesis and musters evidence in support of it, provides transitions where needed (while avoiding tautology, in other words, needless repetition). Good organization provides readers what they need to follow the discussion.	Unsatisfactory writing is difficult if not impossible to follow because there is no coherent organization (or flow) to the writing. It typically has abrupt shifts and material that appears 'out of the blue.'
Argument	Good writing judiciously assembles and evaluates evidence both for and against one's argument while providing reasons for why the balance of evidence favors one's findings, conclusions, and arguments.	Unsatisfactory writing provides no or an obtuse arguments, little if any well-sourced evidence, and/or no fair-minded analysis of competing perspectives.
Style	Good style involves using word choices that reflect an accurate understanding of their meanings, terminology fitting the critical perspectives introduced in the course, and grammar at an appropriate level of sophistication for college-level analysis.	Unsatisfactory writing often if not entirely incoherent – due to failures in organization, word choice, sentence structure, and poor grammar.
Mechanics & Summary	Excellent written work will consistently reflect the above-mentioned virtues. Satisfactory work may have flaws but will, nevertheless, demonstrate that the student has mastered key concepts and has been able to make some good points relevant to the specific assignment.	Unsatisfactory written work fails to communicate. It typically reveals a lack of student effort. When written work is ill-informed or confusing due to poor writing, or both, it will be judged unsatisfactory.
The Art of Writing	Writing is an art. It is hard work. It requires many revisions. It often requires starting over and radical reorganization. It benefits from criticism from more advanced writers. Welcome Criticism. Work the craft. It's the only way to be become a good writer.	To avoid an unsatisfactory evaluation, work the craft, and consult my writing well guide, which will help you avoid some of the most common writing mistakes.

*** Important note: To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher in the course, and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.*

THE QUEST ~ “NATURE & CULTURE” FOCUS

This course has been created for Quest program’s “Nature and Culture” theme by examining nature-related global processes and the religious, spiritual, political dimensions of artistic productions and scientific representations in ‘popular culture.’ It illuminates the global and international tributaries, hybridities, reciprocal influences, and controversies that flow from these processes in the ongoing struggle of humankind to understand its place in and responsibilities toward one another and the rest of the living world.

By looking at these processes and the contentions related to them students will encounter and wrestle with a variety of religion-related perceptions and claims about non-human organisms and environmental systems, such as: Are any of them sacred and worthy of reverence, or conversely, are any of them spiritually or politically dangerous? Is there some sort of divine agency that has given rise to the world and who enjoins responsibilities to it? Do religious worldviews, which emerged in diverse regions around the world, lead to indifference or hostility to earthly organisms or environmental systems, viewing them as profane, or illusory, or of penultimate value, compared to some extra-worldly sacred place of greater, or exclusive, moral and spiritual value? In short, this course poses longstanding questions regarding the nature of the universe, the biosphere, and the ways humans construct meaning and values as they seek to understand their place in both. The course also intersects with other “essential questions” the Quest program poses: including who are we (identities)? What meaning and values should we uphold (through an examined life)? How ought we to live with one another and the wider community of life? And, how we ought to pursue or defend those ecological and social systems we conclude are just and good (justice and power, and war and peace)?

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND QUEST-RELATED STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The quest program has its own Student Learning Objectives, which include the following text:
During this class, through exams, written assignments, and orally, students will . . .

- 1) be able to identify, describe and explain the major types and differences in the world’s religions/spiritualities and how these are typically related to environment-related perceptions and behaviors
- 2) be able to identify, describe and explain a wide variety of course-related terms including religion, spirituality, nature, hybridity, globalization, anthropocentrism, biocentrism, and ecocentrism, as well as the “family resemblances” approach to the study of religion-resembling social phenomena
- 3) be able to explain how social contexts and processes of socialization shape nature-related worldviews, beliefs, values, and practices
- 4) be able to identify, describe and explain the theories and methods, grounded in the Arts and Humanities, that analysts introduced in the course use to illuminate the role that artistic productions in popular culture play expressing, promoting, and shaping nature-related perceptions, spiritualities, values, and behaviors, and how these processes are increasingly globalized, lead to cross-cultural influences, new, hybridized religious forms, and influence social and environmental systems.
- 5) demonstrate they can be self-reflexive and evaluate the knowledge systems and ethical perspectives advanced by individuals and groups very different from their own, while connecting the personal quest to arrive at a compelling worldview with their own intellectual, professional, and even (perhaps) spiritual development.

PRIVACY & CLASS RECORDINGS

Our class sessions may be audio-visually recorded for students in the class for the purposes of review and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate verbally are agreeing to have their voices recorded.

If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared.

As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

READINGS

The required books can be found inexpensively from online and other used booksellers, as well as at the University of Florida bookstore. Additional articles will be available via online links.

Required Texts

Bron Taylor, *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010). Several copies will be available on reserve. In addition to this book, at your leisure during this course, view and listen to some of the 'dark green' [nature-venerating video](#) and [nature-venerating music](#), and other [supplementary materials](#), at the book's website.

Daniel Quinn, *The Story of B* (Bantam, 1997)

Michael Redfield, *The Celestine Prophecy* (NY/Warner 1993)

Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia* (Heyday/Banyan Tree 2004) (or any other edition)

REQUIREMENTS

Movies and Documentaries

Students will view motion pictures pertinent to the course foci. Most of the assigned films will be viewed outside of class. In some cases I will make the film available after class for any who wish to watch it together. Alternatively, students may opt to see these films using streaming or other methods. *Students must see required films no later than they are assigned.*

Module Quizzes

On twelve occasions during the course students will respond to a short quiz based on the readings and other assignments for that week's module. These must be completed by midnight the day prior to class. There will typically be ten true/false or multiple choice questions. The top ten scores from these quizzes will count toward the 100 points possible for this assignment (the two lowest scores will be dropped)

Field Trips (fieldwork / experiential research)

Students will participate in at least one, course-relevant cultural production in Gainesville or the wider region (or virtually if this is not possible), and subsequently, write up an analysis of the course-relevant themes encountered and discuss their findings during class with student colleagues and course instructors. For due dates see the “Schedule” section and for more information see “Fieldwork & Research Paper Guidelines” (page 18 & 19).

Exams

There will be a midterm and a final exam, with diverse questions to respond to, including essay sections. The exams will be comprehensive, with questions drawing on any classroom experience or assignment that occurred previously.

Research Paper and optional Slideshow Presentation

Students will prepare a 2,000 word research paper that adheres to the University of Florida’s Level-Two Writing Requirement. *After submitting a proposal for approval, students will submit a draft of these papers and receive feedback on them. They will then be expected to revise them in the light of the instructor’s suggestions and criticisms (see course schedule for related due dates for the proposal, draft, and revised, final paper).* In addition to this research paper, students may submit a related slideshow illuminating the social phenomena analyzed in the written paper. Slideshows will receive up to 40 bonus points (40 if judged outstanding: if excellent, 30; if good, 20; if course relevant but not particularly good, 10). With student permission, excellent and outstanding slideshows may be shared with course colleagues and/or added to the course syllabus as examples and resources for future classes. Slideshows will be prepared with PowerPoint, Keynote, or other slideshow presentation programs. For more information see the section “Fieldwork & Research Paper Guidelines” (page 18 & 19).

Discussions. There will be opportunities for students to express confusions and ask questions about all course materials and presentations, both in class, and through Canvas. Students themselves will often be able to answer questions or clarify things for one another before course instructors do, but course instructors shall seek to answer all questions within a week.

EVALUATION

Points & Percentages for Required Assignments

Assignment	Proportion of Course Grade
Regular Quizzes (10%) (10 at 10 points each)	10%
Fieldwork Research (5%) (50 points)	5%

Research Paper (200 points; up to 240 if optional slide show also provided.)	20%
Midterm (300 points)	30%
Final (350 points)	35%

Evaluation of Writing Assignments: See the explanations on page 3 & 4 about UF's Writing Requirement, the Evaluation Rubric, and Professor Taylor's writing guide.

Calculating Grades

At the end of the semester, the total number of points earned by each student will be divided by the total number earned by the highest-scoring student. The resulting percentage will be used to calculate each student's grade for the course. Put in a formula, it looks like this:

$$\frac{\text{the score of each individual student (your score)}}{\text{(divided by) the highest score earned by a student}}$$

The percentage arrived at by means of this formula will be evaluated by this scale:

A	≥95
A-	90
B+	87
B	83
B-	80
C+	77
C	73
C-	70
D+	67
D	63
D-	60
F	≤59.99

This kind of scoring is fairer than many other forms of grading because: (1) It is based on what students actually achieve rather than some preconceived standard held by the professor; (2) Each student can receive a high grade; (3) Hard-working students will not be penalized for staying in a

demanding course full of equally industrious students. With a traditional curve, demanding courses that “weed out” less industrious students, leaving hard-working ones, can unintentionally harm good students putting them in competition with each other. This will not occur in this course.

Extra credit

Extra credit can be earned in a number of ways. Exams may include extra credit questions. If so, any extra credit points will be added to the individual student’s score but *only after the highest score earned by a student has been established*. This ensures that the extra credit earned will not increase the difficulty of the grading scale. Students who contribute significantly to classroom discussions—by pointing instructors to course-related phenomena (including events in Gainesville or nearby that could provide extra credit opportunities for the entire class); or who attend and submit 300-500 word reports from events approved by instructors as extra credit opportunities—will receive extra credit. Apart from extra credit points earned on exams such points will be awarded at the end of the semester after the grading scales have been finalized.

Late or Missing Assignments

Students who do not make discussion posts on time will not receive credit for them. Students who cannot take an exam on time for medical reasons, or deaths in their families, must inform the course instructors before the exam of the reason for their impending absence and provide evidence verifying the reason. No accommodation will be made after the fact apart from a contemporaneous accident immediately prior to the exam. Any makeup exams will take place during finals week.

Academic Dishonesty

Students engaged in any form of academic dishonesty, as defined under the “Academic Misconduct” section of the Student Discipline Code, will be subject to other disciplinary measures. *Students are expected to know what constitutes plagiarism and to understand and avoid inadvertent forms of it that can occur by cutting and pasting quotations from various texts on the World Wide Web and elsewhere*. See UF’s Honor Code at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>

Reviewing exams

Academic dishonesty is so pronounced that faculty need to take precautions to ensure the integrity of exam processes. For this reason, in some classes, exams or parts of them will not be returned, but students may review them during office hours. At the end of the semester, work that was available for student pickup will be available in the Religion Department office in Anderson 107 for 30 days after the official date that grades are posted by the registrar. After this time, they will be shredded & recycled.

Student Evaluations of this Course

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

Courtesy to fellow students and instructors

Cell phones, laptops, and note taking: Cell phones must be turned off during class. I strongly discourage the use of laptops in class because they tend to distract the user and their neighbors from what is transpiring in class. Those who feel they learn better when using a laptop should discuss this and get approval from course instructors. Students with approval to use laptops will sit in a designated place where they will be less distracting to other students. Be prepared to take written notes. Students are not to engage in disruptive behavior such as whispering during the class. If a

course section is via zoom, students are expected to have their video's on and their microphones muted unless called upon, and they may not be engaged in distracting behavior including having others in view or being clothed, or unclothed, in ways that would be illegal in public.

Communicating with instructors

Your instructors pride themselves on being responsive to students and will usually respond within 48 hours. This is not always possible, however, and such rapidity should not be expected. Plan ahead.

Accommodation for Disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/), which will provide documentation to the student who must then send it to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

SCHEDULE

Note: All readings are to be completed before the class date/week under which they are listed. Readings average about 55 pages per week. *This schedule is subject to change: use the online version, which will reflect any changes, rather than printing it.*

(Week 1; 9/2/20) ~ The Quest for Knowledge & Introducing NSPC

Assignments/Readings & Viewing

Selections from [Genesis 1-12](#) (which includes commentary from Professor Taylor).

Andrew Fiala's and Matt Wiebe's articles about '[Creation Myths in the Ancient World](#)' and the '[Creation Story in the Hebrew Bible](#).'

Daniel Quinn, [Animism: Humanities Original Worldview](#)

[Popular Culture](#) itself is defined in different ways so we begin by looking at a discussion of the term in Wikipedia, an online source that some would and others would not consider to be an expression of popular culture

William French, [Rousseau](#)

Presentations & discussions:

-> Welcome & introduction to 'The Great Quest'

-> Epistemological Humility & the Liberating Power of the Sociology of Knowledge

-> Course Framework & Key Terms

Note: Every week there will be opportunities for students to discuss and ask questions about assignments and class materials; there will also be opportunities for questions and discussions through online venues.

(Week 2; 9/9/2020) ~ Abrahamic Cosmogonies

Assignments/Readings & Viewing (before class)

Bron Taylor's [Overview of Daniel Quinn's Ishmael](#). This book was the inspiration for the motion picture "Instinct", and it precedes chronologically *The Story of B*

Lynn White Jr., [The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crises](#)

William French, [Francis of Assisi](#)

Daniel Quinn, *The Story of B*, Bantam, 1997

Zeitgeist Documentary (excerpts to view)

Optional viewing: ["The Bible's Buried Secrets"](#) [1:46:31]

Presentations & discussions:

-> Genesis & Abrahamic cosmogonies

-> Lynn White's thesis about religion and environmental behavior; Saint & Pope Francis

-> Motion Picture: Noah (2014), directed by Darren Aronofsky

(Week 3; 9/16/2020) ~ Animism & Pagan Cosmogonies ~ & two approaches to understanding religion

Assignments/Readings & Viewing

Motion Picture: Bambi (1942), 79 minutes (link provided via canvas)

Daniel Quinn, *The Story of B*, Bantam, 1997 (the "Epilogue" & "Public Teachings appendices are optional.")

Presentations & discussions

-> Brother Sun, Sister Moon (1972); prologue, motion picture, epilogue, and discussion.

-> Explanation of fieldwork-based and course research papers & deadlines.

(Week 4; 9/23/20) ~ Analyzing 'religion'

Assignments/Readings & Viewing

Dark Green Religion, Preface, Readers Guide and Introductory Chapter (ix-12), Chapter 2, Dark Green Religion (pp. 13-41)

Movie: The Wicker Man (1993).

Presentations

-> Two Analytic Approaches to Religion

-> Paganism & The Wicker Man

Introductory resources for motion picture the Mists of Avalon

-> Audio recording on 'Camelot, the Arthurian Legends, & 'The Mists of Avalon'

-> Companion to the Mists of Avalon (document with plot and characters described)

* Recommended: submit your research project proposal for approval this week.

(Week 5; 9/30/2020) ~ Types of Religion

Assignments/Readings & Viewing

Dark Green Religion in North America (Ch 3., 42-70)

Jo Pearson and Sarah Pike, [Wicca](#)

Michael York, [New Age](#)

Michael Redfield, *The Celestine Prophecy* (NY/Warner 1993) (read the first 50 pages)

Presentations & discussions:

> Types of Religion: 'World Religions', Civil & Market Religions; New Religious Movements; New Age, Pagan, and Indigenous traditions.

-> "I AM" - documentary & discussion

* Deadline for submitting your research proposal for approval is Sunday 4 October at 11:59 p.m.

(Week 6; 10/7/20) ~ Disney's Natures & the New Age

Assignments/Readings & Viewing

Bron Taylor, "[Rebels against the Anthropocene? Ideology, Spirituality, Popular Culture, and Human Domination of the World within the Disney Empire](#)," JSRNC 2019

Bron Taylor, [Celestine Prophecy](#)

Jose Arguelles, [Harmonic Convergence](#)

Michael Redfield, *The Celestine Prophecy* (NY/Warner 1993) [read first 100 pages]

Presentations & discussions:

-> Disney's Natures

-> Nature, Science & New Age Nature Spiritualities (in the Celestine Prophecy, and beyond)

-> New Age v. indigenous spiritualities & competing understandings of the sacred.

* Deadline to submit field research proposals is Friday (10.9.2020) @ 11:59 p.m.

(Week 7; 10/14/2020) ~ Ecotopias & Dystopias (Midterm Week)

Assignments/Readings & Viewing

- Michael Redfield, *The Celestine Prophecy*, conclude reading

- Ernest Callenbach's, *Ecotopia*, read first ½.

Presentations & discussions:

-> Utopias, Dystopias and Ecotopias

-> Last chance for pre-exam Q & A

Mid-term exam during class this week

(Week 8; 10/21/2020) ~ Pagan & Radical Environmentalism

Assignments/Readings & Viewing

Dark Green Religion, Ch 4. Radical Environmentalism (71-102).

Bron Taylor, [Animism, Tree Consciousness and the Religion of Life](#), the backstory to Richard Powers' Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *The Overstory*.

John Seed, [Re-Earthing](#)

Ernest Callenbach's, *Ecotopia*, read next ½.

Movie: *The East* (2013)

Recommended Movies (available various ways with streaming services; extra credit for movie reviews): *FernGully* (1992); *The Last Rainforest* (1992), *Hoot* (2006), *Butterfly* (2000), *If a Tree Falls*, and *Pickaxe* (1999).

Presentations & discussions:

-> Midterm exam debriefing

-> View the final 22 minutes of 'The East' and discuss.

-> Radical Environmentalism and Nature Spirituality in novels and cinema.

(Week 9; 10/28/2020) ~ Surfing Spirituality and Outdoor Nature Spiritualities

Assignments/Readings & Viewing

Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia* (conclude, if necessary)

Dark Green Religion, Ch 5. Surfing Spirituality (103-126)

Presentations & discussions:

-> Surfing Spirituality (with excerpts from *Point Break* (1991), *Five Summer Stories* (1972), *Whale Rider* (2002), *Step into Liquid* (2003), *Blue Horizon* (2004), and *Intentio* (2012).

-> Mountaineering presentation with excerpts from "In the Light of Reverence"

-> Discussion of outdoor recreation & nature spiritualities

* Recommended due date for Field Trip reports is by 11:59 2 November. (More time is possible because some such experiences may be after this date.)

(Week 10; 11/4/2020) ~ Pantheism, Gaian Naturalism, & Dark Green Religion

Assignments/Readings & Viewing

Dark Green Religion, Ch 6. Globalization with Predators & Moving Pictures (127-154)

Jack Loeffler, [Edward Abbey](#), "Either everything is divine, or nothing is"

Bernard Zaleha, [Pantheism in American Popular Culture](#) (82-101; the rest is optional)

Presentations & discussions:

-> Dark Green Spiritualities (Part 1): Painting, Photography, and Prose

-> Dark Green Spiritualities (Part 2): Museums, Aquariums & Science Performances

-> Pantheism in the movies and music (including discussion of Zaleha article), including excerpts and discussion of the motion picture *Stigmata* and the role of the Dead Sea scrolls in Christian Pantheism today.

-> Analysis of [A Walk Through Time](#) (an online version of museum-like exhibition on cosmological and biological evolution produced by the Hewlett Packard company).

The first draft of your research paper is due by 11:59 p.m. 6 November.

Note: it will be returned to you, evaluated as indicated previously with suggestions, no later than 20 November.

(Week 11; 11/11/2020) ~ Nature spirituality from pilgrimage to the future

Assignments/Readings & Viewings

Ch 7. Globalization in Arts, Sciences, and Letters (155-179)

Get started on the Avatar readings (listed under week12): B. Taylor, Prologue: *Avatar* as Rorschach; and, Introduction: The Religion and Politics of *Avatar*

Britt Istoft, *Avatar* Fandom, Environmentalism, and Nature Religion

Movie: *Avatar* (2009) (Watch this or next week; there will be a collective viewing opportunity with popcorn after class this or next week.)

The optional slide show, which goes with the research paper,
must be turned in by 11:59 p.m
on 13 November.

Presentations & discussions:

-> Dark Green Spiritualities (Part 3): From Pilgrimage to the Future

-> Introduce and begin watching *Avatar* excerpts.

(Week 12; 11/18/2020) ~ Avatar, Contact & Cultural Conflict over Religion & Nature in Motion Pictures

Assignments/Readings & Viewing

Chapters from *Avatar and Nature Spirituality* (available gratis through Professor Taylor):

- Chris Klassen, Becoming the 'Noble Savage': Nature Religion and the 'Other' in *Avatar*
- Lisa H. Sideris, I See You: Interspecies Empathy and *Avatar*
- B. Taylor, Truth and Fiction in *Avatar*'s Cosmogony and Nature Religion

Video online: Amazon Watch, [Defending the Rivers of the Amazon](#) with Sigourney Weaver (2010, 10:39); [Avatar: A Message from Pandora](#) (James Cameron on protecting the Amazon; optional, 20:00); and from indigenous rights websites: [Indigenous Environmental Network](#); [Amazon Watch](#)

Presentations

Presentations & discussions:

-> Conclude *Avatar* excerpts.

-> discuss & debate the competing perspectives described in *Avatar* & *Contact*, and how they reflect competing views in society at large.

Lecture: *Avatar* (2009) and indigenous peoples, nature, and popular culture: exploring changes from vilification to (sometimes romantic) vindication, with more popular culture exemplars, including excerpts from *Dances with Wolves* (1990).

(Thanksgiving Week - no class 11/25/2020)

Readings:

Suggestion: read ahead the final two chapters of *Dark Green Religion* chapters 8 and 9 (due the next two weeks):

Motion Picture to watch: * Contact (1997)

(Week 13; 12/2/2020) ~ Civil Religion & Terrapolitan Earth Civilization

Readings:

* *Dark Green Religion*, Ch 8, "Terrapolitan Earth Religion (180-99)

Presentations & discussions:

-> Civil and Terrapolitan Earth Religion, from Abraham Lincoln to Robert Bellah and Daniel Deudney

-> Civil Religion and "America's Best Idea" - the PBS documentary about our National Parks - and what it reveals about nature spirituality (and Nationalism) in America.

-> Lecture on the patriotism, environmentalism, and the consecration of The National Parks: America's Best Idea (2009), with excerpts from this PBS documentary series.

Many things are introduced during the 12 hour series on the National Parks that are not included in the assigned excerpts, so here is some important background to have in mind when viewing them, as well as a few things to think about while doing so:

- 1) The establishment of America's National Parks, in most cases, depended upon the violent subjugation and displacement of the indigenous populations already living there.
- 2) Their establishment would not have happened, or at least to the extent and within the specific time frames, were it not for both commercial interests (railroads and tourism, for example) and nationalism, including its ideology of 'manifest destiny.'
- 3) The Parks also include historical and cultural sites, and examples in many places in America including Florida.
- 4) Episode 2 has more historical information about John Muir's battle against the Hetch Hetchy Dam in Yosemite National Park. Before the 1906 earthquake in California, which led to most of San Francisco being burnt to the ground, it looked as though he would win that battle, but afterward, the public switched to supporting it, being misled into believing that the water from it was needed to safeguard the city. Brokenhearted, Muir died soon afterward. But historians say for the most part his loss solidified the notion that National Parks should be off limits to commercial incursions.
- 5) Wallace Stegner is one of the countries greatest western writers. He is often quoted in the documentary but the excerpts shown do not introduce him.
- 6) Many of the cultural sites promote and reinforce patriotism and civil religion, which are in turn often linked to the exceptional natural landscapes and used to foster both we feeling and place feeling, and sometimes even superiority, over other people and places. Is a 'civil earth religion,' or a 'terrapolitan earth religion' expressed and promoted in the parks, or a narrower nationalistic civil religion, or neither?

- 7) Notice how different the reactions of people are to nature, that these reactions are at least some extent ‘socially constructed’, namely, a reflection of the preexisting cognitive and cultural frames people bring to the experience. This was seen in the history chapter in the *Dark Green Religion* book; What examples of it to you see in this film?
- 8) Notice how different the reactions of people are to nature, that these reactions are at least some extent ‘socially constructed’, namely, a reflection of the preexisting cognitive and cultural frames people bring to the experience. This was seen in the history chapter in the *Dark Green Religion* book; What examples of it to you see in this film? E.g., some people were and are horrified and by wild, sometimes geothermal nature, others find the sublime in the continent’s wild places, others find evidence for the grandeur and goodness of God.
- 9) In a section not excerpted, the National Park Ranger Sheldon Jacobs discussed how he had no connections with wild places growing up in Detroit, but was immediately moved and captured by them on his first visit to Yellowstone National Park. At the time of the filming he was an interpretive ranger in Yosemite National Park. A good question when considering his mystical experiences with the Bison in Yellowstone is whether for him, that was a socially constructed experience, or a more personal one grounded in an experience, and a felt relationship, with the beings and place where Bison still are allowed to live.
- 10) Are there examples of animistic or Gaian spiritualities depicted in, and even expressed by the filmmakers, in this documentary? If so, where/when?
- 11) What role did photographers and landscape painters play in expressing and promoting nature spirituality and the establishment and protection of National Parks?
- 12) What role did the nature writer Terry Tempest Williams play; and what if anything did it have to do with nature religion and environmental ethics?

(Week 14; 12/9/2020) ~ Popular Culture & the Future of Religion & Nature

Readings

* *Dark Green Religion*, Ch 9. Conclusion: Dark Green Religion and the Planetary Future (200-222).

Presentations

Lecture: Darwinian Nature Spirituality, Evolutionary Ethics, and The future of Religion and Nature, including “Symphony of Science” music videos & Cosmos video excerpts; includes discussion and excerpts from *The Fountain* (2006, dir. Darren Aronofsky), 96 minutes

Any previously un-submitted Field Trip reports are due by 11:59 p.m. 7 December

Any approved extra credit assignments are due by 11:59 p.m. on 9 December 2019.

FINAL EXAM: TWO HOURS
(During finals week: time/place to be determined)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The rest of this syllabus provides resources and guidelines for the fieldwork assignment and the research paper; followed by a more extensive bibliography of scholarly books and novels, and lists of documentaries, feature films, websites, and other exemplars of the entanglement of religion, nature and popular culture; followed by additional, recommended readings and other resources paralleling the weekly course schedule. These materials can be especially helpful to students when it comes to considering research topics. Links to yet more resources, such as podcasts, music, slideshows, video, and websites, will be made available during the course. Students are encouraged to send to course instructors their own ideas for additional resources.

Research Papers will often if not usually also draw on scholarly articles or books that you find in the library that illuminate your subject matter. This is not absolutely necessary because there may not be scholarly resources for some things you may wish to focus with the kind of focus we are taking in this class. You may, therefore, be plunging into a completely novel area, using lenses learned in or beyond this class as heuristic (interpretive) devices.

Consider what the artists themselves are trying to convince you about, or evoke some emotion in you, or call you to some action. Alternatively, you may elect to focus on the audiences who experience these productions. Consider also whether the social phenomena in question are advancing not only a spiritual approach to nature but also a political ideology, namely, ideas, aims and assertions that constitute a socio-economic-political program. Doing so will also bring into focus the perspectives with which your subject matter is in contention. Good questions to ask include: What do the producers of what you are examining think is at stake? With whom are they in contention? Can their means of artistic expression be considered ‘technologies of the sacred’ and if so, how? If there is a view of where humanity went wrong spiritually and with regard to nature, what is it? And if they are explicitly or implicitly envisioning or advocating a certain kind of future (e.g., a utopian or ‘ecotopian hope), what would it be?

To decide on a research project it would be a good idea to carefully review the entire class schedule to see what is coming up, as well as the “Additional Resources” section at the end of this syllabus.

Hints: In some cases, the theoretical approach and arguments found in *Dark Green Religion* will be helpful as you work up your own paper. Do you find these arguments and the evidence mustered for them compelling? Does your own focus evidence such arguments? Or, does your research cast into question those findings? Alternatively or additionally, *Avatar and Nature Spirituality* might be helpful to you analytically because it exemplifies the sorts of analyses I am looking for in your own papers. You may, therefore, find it helpful to read ahead to find the range of issues it explores that may also be ripe for analysis in your own research.

You are by no means restricted to the many possibilities to be found in the syllabus but being familiar with it may trigger ideas about things you know about that would be fitting. I especially like learning about things I had no idea even existed!

Finally, do not assume that you must focus on social phenomena in popular culture that promotes environmental concern and action. Much of popular culture is indifferent to and a distraction from any environmentalist agenda, and some is in direct opposition to such an agenda, including due to religious, political, and moral beliefs that view environmentalist worldviews as religiously, politically, and ethically misguided or even dangerous.

The more innovative and creative your research paper is, the better argued and evidenced, the better your grade for it will be; the same applies to your slide show presentation if you elect to do one to complement your research paper. If your paper is exceptional, I may encourage you to develop it further in order to submit to a scholarly journal, including the *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*, which I edit.

Field Trips (fieldwork) analysis assignment. Students will participate in at least one, course-relevant cultural production in Gainesville or the wider region during the semester, and write up an analysis of the course-relevant themes encountered at it or during it. UF's Harn Art Museum has regular exhibitions that are often fitting (see <http://harn.ufl.edu/exhibitions/current>) and our Florida Museum of Natural History (see <https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/>) provide many opportunities for such experiences as does the Planetarium at Santa Fe College (see <https://www.sfcollge.edu/planetarium/index>).

Many of the world's great museums, aquariums and planetariums provide virtual experiences. Due to the corona virus pandemic, some of these have enhanced what they offer or are providing such experiences for the first time. If local experiences are not available, or with the approval of instructors, for this field studies requirement students may analyze the virtual exhibitions at venues such as the American Visionary Art Museum (Baltimore), Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History (Washington DC), Shedd Aquarium, Chicago, United States (Chicago), Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna (Italy), and the National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City. At Google Arts and Culture there are many possibilities (see <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner?hl=en&tab=pop>). Students can also submit for approval other exhibitions they may wish to explore, and additional ideas will be shared during the course via canvas.

When writing up your analyses, in 1,000 to 1,500 words, do the following:

- provide detailed description of the venue or event. Consider saying something about the visitors and whether there is something about them that is worth analyzing.
- analyze what course-relevant beliefs and values the curators, and those whose work is being featured, are trying to convey. Reflect as well on whether you find the approach evocative and/or compelling.
- use the theoretical lenses presented in the class to make an argument about the social phenomenon under investigation, or draw on other analytic perspectives you have learned elsewhere, or develop your own analytic approach as you make an *argument*.

In short, do not just describe but *analyze* and make connections with the course material.

Fieldwork papers require no research other than the fieldwork experience itself; simply draw on the analytic tools provided during the course itself.

SCHOLARLY BOOKS AND ARTICLES

* most course relevant

- * David Ingram, *Green Screen: Environmentalism and Hollywood Cinema* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000).
- * Adrian Ivakhiv, *Ecologies of the Moving Image: Cinema, Affect, Nature* (WLU Press 2013) (N)
- * John C. Lyden, *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals* (New York University Press, 2003) (N)
- * Jeffrey Kripal, *Mutants and Mystics: Science Fiction, Superhero Comics, and the Paranormal* (University of Chicago Press, 2011).
- Verlyn Flieger, "Taking the Part of Trees: Eco-Conflict in Middle-Earth," in *J. R. R. Tolkien and His Literary Resonances: Views of Middle-Earth*, (Westport, CT & London: Greenwood Press, 2000. 147-58).
- Lee Gilmore, *Theatre in a crowded fire: ritual and spirituality at Burning Man* (University of California Press, 2010)
- Robert K. Johnston, *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000)
- John May, ed, *New Image of Religious Film* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1997).
- Eric Mazur, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Film* (ABC-CLIO, 2011)
- Margaret Miles, *Seeing and believing: religion and values in the movies* (Beacon: 1996).
- Joel Martin & Conrad Ostwalt, eds, *Screening the Sacred: Religion, Myth, and Ideology in Popular American Film* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995).
- Jolyon Mitchell and S. Brent Plate, eds., *The Religion and Film Reader* (Routledge, 2007).
- S. Brent Plate, *Religion and Film: Cinema and the Re-Creation of the World* (2009).
- Graham St. John, *Global Tribe: Technology, Spirituality and Psytrance* (Equinox Press, 2012). (engages trance and psychedelic, nature-related shamanism)
- Graeme Turner, *Film as Social Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).
- Gregory J. Watkins, *Teaching Religion and Film* (Oxford University Press, 2008)

NOVELS

- Margaret Atwood, *The Year of the Flood: A Novel* (Bloomsbury, 2009. London: Virago Press, 2010).
- Dan Brown, *Origin* (New York: Doubleday 2017).
- Robert A. Heinlein, *Stranger in a Strange Land* (New York: Putnam, 1961).
- Barbara Kingsolver, *Flight Behavior* (New York: Harper, 2012).
- Michael Murphy, *Golf in the Kingdom* (New York: Viking, 1972).
- Starhawk, *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (New York: Doubleday, 1993).
- Alice Walker, *The Color Purple: A Novel* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982).

DOCUMENTARIES

Nature-venerating (and/or conservationist)

- American Buffalo: Spirit of a Nation (1999)
- Greenfire: Aldo Leopold (2011)

- I Am (III) (2010), Tom Shadyac
- In the Light of Reverence (2001)

Journey of The Universe (2001) RamDass|Fierce Grace (2001)
The National Parks: America's Best Idea (2009f)
The Sacred Balance (2002); based on David Suzuki's book by this title, narrated by him.
Excerpts are sometimes available for free on youtube; if these links do not work, search for them or use a paid video service: [part 1](#); [part 2](#); [part 3](#); [part 4](#); [Astronaut's View of Earth: Science and Spirituality](#).
The Vanishing Prairie (1954) Thinking Like A Watershed (1998)
What the Bleep do we Know? (2011)

THEATRICAL MOTION PICTURES

Nature-venerating/mystical, pantheist, etc.

American Beauty (1999) Beasts of the Southern Wild (2012)
Evan Almighty (2007) Fern Gully (1992)
Golfing in the Kingdom (2010) On the Road (2012)
Tree of Life (2011) The Fountain (2006)

Pagan, Wiccan, Druidic

The Secret of Kells (2009); animated
The Mists of Avalon (2001) (links above)
The Wicker Man (1973)
Dancing at Lughnsana (1998)

Animistic (many are available online)

[Dumbo](#) (1941)
Bambi (1942)
Fern Gully (1992)
The Lion King (1994)
Moana (2016)
Pochahontas (1995)
Spirited Away (2001)

Nature Religion & Dark Green Religion

Avatar (2009)
Epic (2013)
Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002). Peter Jackson (Director).
Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Rings. (2001) Peter Jackson (Director).
Spirit Bear (2005)
Grizzly Man (2005)

New Science/New Age

I Am (2011)
Mindwalk (1990)
The Butterfly Effect (2004)
What the Bleep Do We Know? (2011)
The Fountain (2006)

Apocalyptic and Dystopian (cf. Ecotopian/Utopian, and also Apocalyptic and Dystopian, and Natural Disasters / Phenomena)

Alive (1993)
Planet of the Apes (2001)
12 Monkeys (1995)
Fight Club (1999)
Hunger Games (2012)
Left Behind: The Movie (2001), and sequels
The Perfect Storm (2000)
This is the End (2013)
Twister (1996)
Volcano (1997)
Wall-E (2008); animated.

Outdoor recreation & adventure (Surfing, climbing, fishing)

Way of the Ocean (2011), 62 minutes, ‘explores the connection between man and sea through a visual feast of poetic motion’
Salmon Fishing in Yemen (2011)
Step into Liquid (2003)
Minds in the Water (2011)

Science Fiction

Dune (1984), also a book and 2000f TV series.
2001, A Space Odyssey (1968)
Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977)

Paranormal phenomena (including near death, reincarnation, extra-terrestrials, ghosts, etc).

Afterlife (2011)
DMT: The Spirit Molecule (2010)
Signs (2002)
12 Monkeys (1995)

Asian Nature Spiritualities

Princess Mononoke (1997)
The Matrix (1999)
Star Wars (1977)

VIDEO GAMES, COMPUTER APPLICATIONS

Captain Planet
Game of Thrones Companion
DMD (or [Shadows of the Damned](#))

COMIC BOOKS

Some are relevant

PERFORMANCES & FESTIVALS

Burning Man

Raves

Welcome Ceremony, World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002)

THEME PARKS

Many are relevant: Disney, Bush Gardens, Sea World, etc.

WEBSITES

Professor Leslie Sponsel's [spiritual ecology](#) website has many resources pertinent to this class and its projects.

RECOMMENDED READINGS AND RESOURCES BY COURSE SCHEDULE

The following can also provide resources

(Week 1) ~ Cosmogony and Ethical Order

Assignments/Personal Viewing (recommended)

Excerpts on the sources and formation of the Hebrew Bible from [Zeitgeist the Movie](#) (view Part I, 13:21-40:10; more if you wish) [The Bible's Buried Secrets](#) (1:44)

(Week 2) ~ Competing Cosmogonies (Paganism focus)

Further / recommended reading:

Recommended: [Lynn White biography](#) and article about the [Lynn White Thesis](#)

Robert Heinland, *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1981)

Starhawk, *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (1993) (compare with Ecotopia; a motion picture is in the works).

Recommended movies: Dumbo (1941) (available widely online); The Color Purple (1985), 2 hours, 34 minutes.

(Week 3) ~ Battle of the Cosmogonies (Animism & Evolution focus)

Further / recommended reading:

Graham Harvey, [Animism Today](#)

Dana Lyons, [Tree Music](#), and the related song, [The Tree mp3](#)

Recommended movies: Any of the Disney movies excerpted in class, many others are relevant as well, as are these documentaries: Disney True Life Adventures (1950s), The Vanishing Prairie (1954) excerpts; Oceans (DisneyNature) 'extra features interviews'; Gates of Heaven (1978, Dir. Errol Morris)

(Week 4) ~ Dark Green Nature Religions

Recommended movie: The Mists of Avalon (2001); also strongly recommended are Fantasia (1940); The Lion King (1994); Pocahontas (1995)

(Week 5) ~ Religion and Nature in North America; and New Age Spirituality

Recommended readings:

[Rachel Carson's nature religion](#), selected readings

John Muir, [Cedar Keys](#) (written from the Florida Gulf town by this name)

Recommended viewings:

RamDass | Fierce Grace (2001); Afterlife (2011) (promotes reincarnation based on supposedly scientific approach to near-death experiences). Note: the motion picture version of The Celestine Prophecy (2006) was a critical and commercial failure (for good reason), but it is interesting, nevertheless and you may find and watch it if you wish

(Week 6) ~ New Age Nature Spirituality

Recommended readings & viewings:

Bron Taylor, [The Hundredth Monkey](#)

Movies: The Butterfly Effect (2004) and [Mindwalk](#) (1990)

Documentary: [What the Bleep Do We Know?](#) (2004).

Documentaries related to the Mayan calendar and the New Age interest in it:

“2012: Science or Superstition” (2009) [see especially the first 41 and last 15 minutes, which exemplifies New Age visions for an enlightened partnership society].

[Cracking the Maya Code](#) (Nova/PBS, 2008), 78 minutes [A far more scientific examination of the Mayan calendar and supposed prophecies.]

[The Mayan Word](#) (2012) online documentary, 64 minutes. [Provides contemporary Mayan perspectives about the end of the world, especially, that we are destroying our planet and need to work together to create a new beginning. Critically engages New Age views.]

(Week 7) ~ Mid Term Week

(Week 8) ~ Radical Environmental Nature Spirituality

Recommended documentaries:

Documentaries related to the Mayan calendar and the New Age interest in it:

If a Tree Falls (2011): about the Earth Liberation Front activist Daniel McGowan, who worked with Bill Rogers (Avalon), who is discussed in *DGR chapter 4*.

[Pickaxe](#) (1999): activist produced documentary

Movies about resisting deforestation and species extinctions:

FernGully; The Last Rainforest (1992), 76 minutes; Hoot (2006); The Big Trees (1952): The East (2013).

Recommended readings

Bron Taylor, [Resacralizing Earth: Environmental Paganism and the Restoration of Turtle Island](#), in *American Sacred Space* (1995), 97-151.

Bron Taylor, [Earthen Spirituality or Cultural Genocide?: Radical Environmentalism's Appropriation of Native American Spirituality](#), *Religion* 27(2):183-215, April 1997.

(Week 9) ~ Surfing Spirituality and other Outdoor Nature Spiritualities

Recommended readings:

Optional, surfing-related, [supplemental materials](#).

Samuel Snyder, [Fly Fishing as Nature Religion](#)

Greg Johnson, [Rock Climbing](#)

Kocku von Stuckrad, [Mountaineering](#)

Recommended movies & sounds

Music and Video: See the [DGR surfing spirituality venue](#). There have been many websites that have dealt with surfing spirituality (some of which have disappeared since the first time this course was offered) *Recommended*: [video of Kelly Slater and Eddie Vetter](#). Search also for their conservation efforts at Trestles surf break in California; search also online for surf music.

[Point Break](#) (1991), [Golf in the Kingdom](#) (2010), *Minds in the Water* (2011), *Intentio* (2012), *Five Summer Stories* (1972), *Whale Rider* (2002), *Soul Surfer* [about a Christian surfer girl who loses her arm to a shark but keeps her faith] (2013). For a free website see [surf movies](#).

Recommendations about fishy spirituality:

You tube videos about Bristol Bay, which UF Religion and Nature graduate Dr. Samuel Snyder is trying to defend (4-5 minutes each).

- [Casting for Conservation in Bristol Bay](#) (and) [The Live Cast](#)

Blogs:

- Erin Block's [Mysteries Internal](#)
- Chris Hunt's [Eat More Brook Trout](#) (who recommended the film 'A Deliberate Life' which is available there).

Books:

- Books: David James Duncan, *River Why* (Snyder does not recommend the movie based on it); and Norman Maclean, *A River Runs Through It* (1976).

(Week 10) ~ Pantheism and Gaian Naturalism

Recommended readings:

[Pantheism Net](#) of the World Pantheist Movement (see especially the [WPM Statement of Principles](#))

Movie: *Stigmata* (1999), 98 minutes (search online, available at several sites)

Highly recommended documentaries

[Cosmos: a spacetime odyssey](#) (2014) with Neil deGrasse Tyson, lead author co-written with Ann Dryan; and *Cosmos: A personal voyage* (1980) narrated by Carl Sagan, co-written with Ann Dryan & Steven Soter

Recommended resources about David Attenborough

[Sir David Attenborough - the story behind Life on Earth - BBC](#): Here, Naturalistic Animism is exemplified in Attenborough's famous encounter with Mountain Gorillas, during which he said, "There is more meaning and mutual understanding in exchanging a glance with a Gorilla than any animal I know. We're that similar. Their sight, their hearing, their sense of smell, are so similar to ours that we see the world as they do."

Yet, ecstatic experiences like this do not prevent him from seeing the violent side of nature and facing head on those who wish he would attribute it to a divine being: [Sir David](#)

[Attenborough on nature, worms, predation, and those who believe in a beneficent God](#) (2.23)

David Attenborough [on Darwin and the Tree of Life](#) blames Genesis as the root cause of the despoliation of the earth. (See Christian [article in response](#))

[David Attenborough's favorite moments](#) (*recommended*, worth perusing)

[Symphony of Science music videos](#) (scroll down and, at least, view ‘We’re all connected’ and ‘The Unbroken Thread’), then look at the other music there, such as ‘[Holy Now](#) (new video at this link), and Tracy Chapman’s music video, [Heaven’s Here on Earth](#).

Recommended movies:

American Beauty (1999); Beasts of the Southern Wild (2012)

(Week 11) ~ Nature spirituality from pilgrimage to the future

Recommended documentary: Journey of the Universe (2001)

(Week 12) ~ Cultural Battle over Religion (and Nature) in Contact and Avatar

Recommended readings:

David Landis Barnhill, Spirituality and Resistance: Ursula Le Guin’s *The Word for World is Forest* and the Film *Avatar*

Matthew Holtmeier, Post-Pandoran Depression or Na’vi Sympathy: *Avatar*, Affect, and Audience Reception

Rachelle K. Gould, Nicole M. Ardoin, and Jennifer Kamakanipakolonahē’okekai Hashimoto

Transposing the Conversation into Popular Idiom: The reaction to *Avatar* in Hawai’i

Joy H. Greenberg, *Avatar* and Artemis: Indigenous Narratives as Neo-Romantic Environmental Ethics

Daniel Heath Justice, Afterword.

[Avatar and Nature Religion](#) from the DGR website

Alexander Zaitchik, [To get the gold, they will have to kill every one of us](#), Salon, 10 February 2013.

Martin Ball, [Why Psychedelics Make Avatar More Sophisticated](#) (no date)

Recommended Movie: *Dances with Wolves* (1990), 2 hours, 18 minutes.

(Week 13) ~ Civil Religion & Terrapolitan Earth Civilization

Recommended film: *Spirit Bear* (2005)

(Week 14) ~ Popular Culture and the Future of Religion and Nature

Recommended film: *Tree of Life* (2011)

Recommended YouTube documentary: [There’s No Tomorrow](#) (2012) (produced with support from the [Post Carbon Institute](#)).